DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 360 729 EA 025 179

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TITLE Student and Educator Perceptions of the Impact of an Alternative School Structure.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Atlanta, GA, April 12-16, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Dropout Programs; *Educational Environment; *High Risk Students; High Schools; *Nontraditional Education; Outcomes of Education; Parent Student Relationship; *School Organization; Standards; *Student Attitudes; Teacher Expectations of Students; *Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Tennessee

ABSTRACT

Recent research suggests that special programs designed to "fix" low-achieving students are based on a deficiency model that does not serve their clients' needs. Alternative schools are providing conditions necessary to address disenfranchised students' problems. The descriptive case study summarized here was conducted to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators regarding their experiences in an alternative school setting and to make comparisons with experiences in 10 traditional schools in a large Tennessee school system. Findings showed that students are assigned to the alternative school for varied reasons. The alternative school's smaller, supportive, more structured learning environment and close faculty/student relationships are perceived as positively influencing student performance. Students feel that guidance counselors' support and instruction strongly influences their anger and behavior. Perceptions differ concerning alternative-school course work difficulty, standards, and student outcomes. Alternative school teachers perceived their roles as different from traditional school teachers. While teachers are viewed as enhancing student progress, the majority of parents are perceived as impeding their children's progress. There is no consistent action plan for integrating alternative school students into their base school environments. Both types of schools must cooperate. Further findings are summarized. The report contains 33 references and 3 appendices with sample student and teacher interview forms. (MLH)

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Student and Educator Perceptions of the Impact of an Alternative School Structure

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
The American Educational Research Association.
Atlanta, GA

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April 1993

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Introduction

School systems in our country are considering and implementing a wide range of organizational structures to better address the diverse needs of their educational constituents. As a result, numerous types of alternative school structures have been added to the traditional public, private, and parochial school settings. Some of the newer alternative structures offer students more choice, while others limit choices. Magnet schools provide expanded offerings; while some highly specialized schools offer a narrower perspective. Also within the range of alternative structures are public schools designed as a last resort for students with severe problems, who are at risk of dropping out of school, or who have dropped out of school and want to complete the requirements for a high school diploma outside the traditional public school setting. Some of these alternative structures exist within the traditional school while others are distinct entities. In addressing the diversity of alternative school structures, Gregory (1988) suggests that "alternative schools" be perceived as school structures that empower teachers and students and personalize teaching and learning rather than as school settings that exist for those who don't "fit" with the traditional school structure.

Rationale for alternative schools

Many of these alternative schools are the result of the failure of traditional schools to address the needs of large groups of students. Currently one in four students will not graduate from high school and their profile is evident early in their school careers. It is not only the poor, low ability, disruptive students who fall within this group of disenfranchised students. According to Kuykendall, "The lure of homogeneity and standardized practices conspire against youngsters who may just be different, not deviant" (O'Neil, 1992, p.1). In some cases it is the gifted and talented who, lacking an environment that encourages them, become "at risk" members of alternative schools (Osborne & Byrnes, 1990). Other students are "pushed out" by insensitive teachers or rigid organizations that are not meeting their needs. These individuals are often bright students from well educated, middle class families who find themselves balancing between academic success and mediocrity or failure within the traditional school setting. According to Sinclair and Ghory (1987), "If students lean or (are pushed by the school environment) toward underachievement or failure in school, they risk becoming marginal" (p.13). In a study of alternative students identified as "deviant" by their traditional schools, Taylor (1986-87) noted that the students mentally and emotionally withdrew from their traditional schools because these schools labeled students, were too rigid in structure, failed to provide the support students needed, and lacked a means to help students feel that they belonged. Even for large percentages of students not labeled as marginal, at-risk, or deviant, traditional schools are not perceived as stimulating and encouraging environments. According to Kay (1991), many successful students who entered school curious, confident, and enthusiastic become bored, obedient, and passive with "getting through" as their main goal.

While many specialized programs are specifically designed to address the needs of low performing students, many are not adequately meeting their clients' needs. Gerics and Westheimer (1988) suggest that programs designed to "fix" low achieving students are based on a deficiency model which is the "dominant implicit theoretical approach to school failure and the dropout problem" (p. 44). They conclude from studying fifty-two schools involved in New

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York City's extensive Dropout Prevention Initiative (DPI) that programs based on the deficiency model will not solve the problems they are trying to correct. In comparing the deficiency model with Dewey's progressive philosophy, Gerics and Westheimer (1988) perceive the need "to question the social organization of schooling as the source of the problem instead of presuming deficiencies endemic to at-risk populations who must be targeted for special motivational activities to help them conform to the demands of the school" (p. 44). They further suggest that schools must have an entirely different focus to unlock the motivation of these students. They should be constructed around students' experiences, focused on a vision for the future, conscious of raising expectations, and determined to challenge student growth and to enrich the meanings already present in the students' lives. Such schools would not need "to resort to ineffective bribes and other external forms of motivation" (Gerics & Westheimer, 1988, p. 57).

The many contributing causes to the low performance of some students include reduced family support; family, community, environmental and societal pressures; the inability of established organizations to meet the escalating needs of young people; and increasing numbers of students with problems resulting from substance abuse or teenage pregnancy. Students who are not successful in traditional school settings often have poor self-esteem, lack a sense of self-efficacy or self-competence (Bandura, 1986; Stipek & Gralinski, 1991), and do not perceive that committing themselves to educational outcomes is worth the effort (Eccles, 1983).

The only way to reduce the impact of these outside influences is for schools to be responsive to the variations among students that result from their previous experiences. According to Sinclair and Ghory (1987), traditional schools are both a force in creating marginality and one of the best possible resources for reducing it. However, according to Fantini (1989), traditional schools are more geared to normative educational structures which perpetuate labeling and inequality than in developing environments that will promote achievement for all students. He encourages traditional schools to rethink their delivery of services to better meet the needs of the less successful students. Kuykendall, in a presentation to ASCD's 47th Annual Conference, asserted that the end result of failing to meet their needs is crime, drug abuse, and other anti-social behaviors. She said, "When too many youngsters become convinced that they will not succeed in our schools...and in mainstream America . . . they take whatever skills and ingenuity they have, and they take the low road" (O'Neil, 1992, p. 1).

Conditions that distinguish alternative schools from traditional schools

Alternative schools are providing conditions necessary to address many of the weaknesses of traditional schools by focusing on the needs of disenfranchised students. Improving the self-esteem of troubled students is at the heart of many alternative school programs. A common complaint against traditional programs is that they are more concerned with process and product than with the actual needs of their students. One alternative school art program was designed to focus on developing each student's inner sense of self as the catalyst for learning (Kay, 1991). Another alternative school, based on Glasser's control theory, focused on building self-esteem through developing the four As: attention, acceptance, appreciation, and affection (Uroff & Greene, 1991). Taylor's (1986-87) study of "deviant" alternative school students suggests that students become more successful when they begin to regain a sense of self-worth. The students in her study improved their self-images, outlooks on life, and attitudes toward further education as a result of their alternative school experience. These findings are supported by several earlier studies that link alternative schools with improved affective growth in students (Duke & Mazio, 1978; Strathe & Hash, 1979).

Another distinguishing feature relates to the selection of instructional methods. The incorporation of a wide range of instructional methods is frequently cited as having a positive influence on student outcomes in many alternative schools (Zahorik,1980; Raywid,1987). While Zahorik, Raywid, and others acknowledge that actual differences are less apparent than perceived differences, they do suggest that greater dependence on individualized instruction allows students to move at their own pace, study a topic of interest in greater depth, receive more assistance in

difficult areas, and participate in more experiential learning. These approaches counter the negative effects of inflexible traditional curriculum and instruction that often discourage marginal students (Sinclair & Ghory, 1987). According to Raywid (1987), "There is substantial evidence that experiential learning stimulates moral development, enhances self-esteem, expands the interest of adolescents in social problems and their inclinations toward community involvement, and increases a sense of social and personal responsibility" (p. 75). This is particularly important for marginal or disenfranchised students who Schonert, Cantor, and Gordon (1991) describe as having low self-esteem and lower moral reasoning skills.

An additional distinguishing feature of alternative schools is a multi-disciplinary approach. A multi-disciplinary team approach provides a community of support for students in many alternative school settings. The benefit of involving a team composed of teachers, paraprofessionals, and support personnel to work with students and to coordinate vocational and academic programs was cited by Kafka and others (1984). Teachers function in expanded roles in these schools. Successful teachers in alternative settings see themselves as informal counselors and facilitators as well as teachers, see instruction as more than content coverage, and are persistent in working with students in academic, behavioral, and social contexts (Glasser, 1986; Wehlage, 1989). Europa (1982) identified the importance of counseling and the close, trusting relationship between the counselor and student.

A number of other studies focused on conditions that positively affected alternative school outcomes. Raywid (1983) found smallness, choice, extended roles, relative autonomy, continuing evaluation, and teacher participation as contributing to the programs' success rates. Foley (1983) identified well defined student populations, strong academic leadership, increased teacher participation in management, academic innovation, clear standards for conduct, and small school size. In a study of an alternative program for troubled ninth graders, Bishop (1987) suggested that team teaching, an academic focus, group and individual counseling, guest speakers, field trips, group social activities, and afterschool mini-courses were effective components. According to Taylor (1986-87), empathetic teachers are especially critical in meeting the emotional, affective, and socialization needs of disenfranchised students.

Impact of alternative schools

Although studies of alternative school outcomes are limited, they do provide insights into conditions that contribute to both student and school successes. Several studies highlight the impact that alternative schools have had on student performance. Martin and Mann (1982) studied three alternative school programs and found that individualized instruction and social support for students improved both behavior and academic performance. In a review of the research, Raywid (1984) found that alternative schools improve student attendance, attitude, involvement, and achievement.

To have a positive impact, alternative schools must avoid many of the same obstacles that face traditional schools. Kleinbard (1983) found that alternative schools, like many of their traditional school counterparts, are confronted with the following problems: homogeneous student populations, struggles for program control, too many goals, need for improved evaluation, and lack of innovative instructional strategies. According to Silvestri (1986), alternative schools that emphasize basic skills, standardized testing, and traditional instructional approaches create the same conditions that caused students to be disenfranchised in their traditional schools. Gerics & Westheimer (1988) found that high-interest, high pressure alternative education programs designed to "fix" students are "merely an attempt to fix up a fatally flawed system" (p. 58).

Need for further research

In terms of research on alternative schools, it is apparent that a gap exists between "what is" and "what ought to be" in two areas. First, there is a void in the research base about the actual ways schools create optimal learning conditions for all students. Researchers and educators have underscored the need to develop conditions that foster a sense of community within our schools

(Barth, 1990). Howard Gardner, in his research on multiple intelligences, urges all schools to acknowledge and develop more than academic talents (Gardner, 1983). Robert Slavin's work with low achieving students and cooperative learning focuses on incorporating more humanistic, cooperative, and collaborative approaches in order to make the experience of schooling more meaningful, productive, and successful for all students (Slavin, Karweit, & Wasik, 1992-93). Despite the growing knowledge base reflecting the need to rethink traditional approaches, the majority of schools continue traditional practices that reward the talented students and punish those who do not "fit the mold." Second, there is a lack of current research in an area that is of significant concern to school systems. There is a need to continue to study those schools, teachers, and students who are successful in overcoming the obstacles that drive so many students to the margins. Such research has important implications for other communities considering establishing alternative school structures and provides some non-cost possibilities for making traditional school structures more responsive to the needs of all students.

Purpose of the Study

The current study was conducted to determine the perceptions of students, teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators regarding their experiences in an alternative secondary school setting and to make comparisons with their experiences in traditional base schools. The study involves individuals at one alternative school and ten traditional schools in Tennessee's third largest school system. Administrators sanctioned the study as a means to identify both intended and unintended outcomes of an existing alternative school program and its perceived impact within the school system. The objectives of the current study were to:

1. identify the problems that necessitated the students' placement in the alternative school and how the alternative school program impacted the problem;
2. determine students' perceptions of their experiences and relationships at the alternative school and compare them with those at their base schools;
3. determine educators' perceptions of their experiences and relationships in the alternative school setting and compare them with those at other schools in which they have worked;
4. identify strengths and weaknesses of the alternative school program;
5. identify strengths and weaknesses of base school programs;
6. identify perceptions of educators in traditional base schools about the impact of the alternative school program on returning students' achievement and behavior;
7. identify assimilation strategies used with students upon returning to base schools; and
8. identify students' academic performance, behavior, and attitude upon their return to their traditional base schools.

Methodology and Data Sources

This is a descriptive case study using a variety of sources of data. The data related to the alternative school students and faculty members were collected during the spring semester of the 1991-92 school year. Follow-up data related to students who had returned to and completed a semester at their base schools were collected during January and February of the 1992-93 school year.

Subjects. Forty-one students, six teachers, three guidance counselors, and one administrator from the alternative school participated in the study. The teachers' experience in working in an alternative school setting ranged from 4 months to 9 years. The majority of the teachers elected to work in this environment after having some type of initial contact with the school or students served by the school. The administrator was in her second year at the school. Of the forty-one alternative school students, twenty-six completed their requirement at the

alternative school and returned to their base schools in September 1992. Of the twenty-six, only sixteen could be found on their base school attendance rolls as of January 1993. The base school principals identified one as having graduated early, one as attending a private "alternative" school, and one as having moved out of state. Four other students from three schools were not contacted. Principals, assistant principals, and/or guidance counselors who were most knowledgeable about the progress of the sixteen students were interviewed at ten base schools.

Data Sources. Interviews were conducted with students and questionnaires were given to teachers, guidance counselors, and the administrator at the alternative school. Interviews were also conducted with appropriate personnel at the ten base schools to which the alternative school students had returned. The principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor who had primary responsibility for or knowledge of a given student were asked to use the student's grades, attendance, and discipline records as well as professional judgment to assess the student's overall progress at their school. An additional interview was conducted with the alternative school principal to gather her perceptions of the long term successes of her students and of the strategies used by the base schools to assimilate the alternative school students into the base school culture.

Instrumentation. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were chosen as the methods of data collection. (See Appendix A for the student interview and teacher questionnaire schedules used at the alternative school. Appendix B contains the interview schedule used with base school personnel.) The format of the interviews and questionnaires was open-ended and included some demographic information. The open-ended format was chosen to encourage in-depth responses from the participants and to avoid limiting response options. The instruments were field-tested and revised based upon the feedback provided. Questions included on the alternative school interview were identified from the research and from suggestions from the alternative school and base school personnel. The base school faculty interview was designed to gather follow-up information on the students' academic, behavioral, and social progress. Questions were included on the interview to assess the same areas of student performance included on the alternative school interview. In keeping with the desires of school system personnel, it also focused on perceptions of the success of students who returned to their base schools and of methods used to assimilate them into the traditional school culture.

Data analysis. The participants' responses were analyzed using qualitative analysis procedures. Inductive modes of analysis were used to allow categories, patterns, and relationships to emerge (Sherman & Webb, 1988; Schumacher & McMillan (1993). Processes included gaining an overall perspective through a preliminary analysis, identifying tentative categories, categorizing and ordering the data, and synthesizing the data into patterns or themes. Through preliminary analysis, relevant data segments were developed. Generally, the data segments corresponded to the questions on the research instrument. The intent of the analysis at this point was to identify distinct categories and subcategories emerging from the data. As the analysis progressed, some reorganizing of categories occurred. Similarities and distinctions among the categories were examined to discover the major themes or patterns. Patterns are expressed as findings which represent a higher-level synthesis. The narrative description accompanying the findings provides indepth information that illustrates the recurring themes.

Periodic deductive checks on the legitimacy of the patterns or findings provided a level of verification. In addition, the two researchers involved in the study categorized and analyzed the data independently. Data collection and analysis were not simultaneous events. Analysis occurred after the data from each of the three respondent groups were collected. Responses from students, alternative school faculty, and representative base school personnel were analyzed separately, and findings represent their unique perspectives.

Findings

While the findings are not presented in one-to-one correspondence to the research objectives,

taken together they address the objectives and provide key insights from across the various repondent groups.

1. Students are assigned to the alternative school setting for a wide range of reasons.

Truancy was identified as the major cause for assignment to the alternative school. Approximately a fourth of the students had problems with excessive absences from their base schools. General problems with discipline, poor attitude, and/or fighting with students and/or teachers were the reasons cited for about one-third of the students. Additional problems related to consumption of alcohol and use of drugs.

The severity of the problem precipitating the suspension or expulsion from the traditional base school also differed greatly from school to school. At some schools, principal interviews indicated that assignment to the alternative school was made only if students had drug, alcohol, or weapons offenses or when all other efforts and interventions at the base school had been exhausted. At these schools, excessive absences and tardies were generally not the reasons for alternative school assignments. At other schools, however, the alternative school was viewed as a way to "get the student's attention" and was used as a means for dealing with excessive absenteeism or repeated minor offenses.

The majority of the alternative school faculty indicated that their students have "had a history of being unsuccessful in the public school setting." Two said that many of their students had been victims of abuse or neglect at home. One said that the students' successes "are not in areas most of society finds acceptable." Two of the faculty members said that their alternative school students are not unlike many other students. Several noted that students have potential that has not been tapped. According to one teacher, "What they are lacking are self-discipline and social skills. As a result, many have poor self-concepts."

2. The smaller, supportive, and more structured learning environment at the alternative school setting is perceived to have a positive effect on student academic and behavioral improvements.

Students readily acknowledged that the alternative school differed from their base schools. While differences were apparent in many areas, nearly a third of the students commented on the positive impact of the strict, more structured environment and the smaller size. They perceived that the smaller size provided more opportunities for attention from the teachers, one-on-one assistance, and privileges. One-fourth of the students commented on the "nicer," less crowded, and more conducive learning environment. One student commented that "learning is easier because of fewer distractions."

The teachers at the alternative school underscored the need for more structure and reduced teacher/pupil ratios than traditional schools to handle a clientele with severe problems. They indicated, however, that this structure should be "flexible within well-established limits." "Although there are more rules," one teacher said, "we are more understanding of infractions and place more emphasis on learning from mistakes." The majority of the teachers commented that the smaller teacher/pupil ratio provides the teachers with the time needed to work intensely with each student.

3. Close student/faculty relationships at the alternative school is reported to have a positive effect on student performance.

The majority of students identified teachers' affective qualities and a willingness to become personally involved with students at the alternative school as positive influences. Students credited their teachers with encouraging them to attend school regularly and to do their work. Alternative school teachers are described as more caring; concerned; understanding; attentive to individual student needs; willing to spend time with students, to listen to students' concerns, and to keep their conversations confidential; and more likely to have fun with their students than teachers at their base schools. One student said, "They don't mistreat students," while another commented that "they don't act superior." As a result, the students said they felt more

comfortable asking questions and relying on their teachers for support in academic and behavioral areas. These feelings were not unanimous, however. Approximately ten percent criticized the teachers' "close watch" and indicated that "teachers get mean sometimes." Two students said that the alternative school "teachers don't really teach" and that "the aides are not professional."

Several students acknowledged that teachers at base schools "had no time to help the students who need it." Other concerns with base school teachers included not explaining in great depth or communicating their reasons for acting, not showing feelings or letting students know they care, backing up other teachers rather than students, and "telling everyone what you [the students] say and do."

4. Students feel that support and instruction from guidance counselors has a major impact on their ability to control their anger and behavior.

Seventy percent of the alternative school students indicated that their alternative school guidance counselors were helpful in assisting them with their problems. They described them as understanding, patient, concerned about students, "accessible when problems arise," willing to take extra time with students when they need it, and determined to treat students nicely. One student described the counselor as "a friend." Counseling approaches described by students were: making deals with students; probing; encouraging, but not forcing students to talk; "being there" for students, conducting counseling groups, taking students on field trips; "playing silly games," and rewarding students' small successes. While a large percentage of students made positive comments about the impact guidance counselors have had on improving their behavior, one student summed up their sentiment by saying, "They are always there when you're in trouble to help you out . . . also to talk to you if you're feeling bad." Those who did not perceive the guidance counselors as positive or helpful said that they asked too many questions.

The students' perceptions were mixed in comparing the alternative school and base school counselors. Ten students specifically made a comparison between their alternative school counselors to those at their base schools. Half perceived the alternative school counselors to be better and more helpful that those at their base schools, while the other half indicated that the alternative school counselors were basically the same or less helpful than those at their base schools. Three students were more positive about base school counselors than their alternative school counselors. Their comments included: "they would listen to students and teachers," "there was a choice of trained people to talk to," and "they like talking to them." In contrast, the students were four times more negative about their base school counselors. Those commenting said that they never saw counselors, did not think that the school had a counselor, or had no idea what counselors did. Others noted that the guidance counselors in their base schools were not available when students needed them, could not or would not take the time to talk with students, "couldn't be trusted," did not care as much, or primarily worked with grades and schedules. As one student said, "You have to make an appointment to see one and by the time you finally get to see her you've forgotten what the problem was."

5. The differences in perceptions of students' classwork vary considerably.

Students. There were differing opinions concerning the difficulty level of assignments. Nearly two-thirds of the students commented that the required work at the alternative school was easier while the remaining said their assignments were about the same. Two students found the work harder or more challenging. While the work was more interesting for the majority, it was more boring for others. For nearly all, however, it was perceived to be more achievable.

Several reasons were cited as explanation for students' perceptions that the work was easier. First, nearly a third of the students mentioned that the help teachers provided to students exceed what they had previously experienced, that the teachers explained more and lectured less often, and that there was more emphasis on motivating students to learn. Several students said they worked harder and tried to learn more. As one student said, "the work is easier, but I'm learning more. I couldn't do what I was assigned at [base school]. I'm doing it here and

learning more." Second, twenty percent said they benefited from being able to work at their own pace. Third, nearly twenty percent noted that teachers provide the time to complete assignments during the school day or to make up work missed due to absences. Many commented that they were always behind at their base schools because they either did not complete homework assignments, did not know how to complete them, or did not have the time to complete them. Therefore, they were not able to finish their work, were usually behind other students, felt the need to cheat to keep up, got in trouble for falling behind or cheating, or had given up and just did not try. In addition, several students at the alternative school mentioned that they were not overloaded with work, the work was less stressful, tests could be taken over, the work was more interesting and fun, and students did not have to change classes.

Several commented on students' desire to perform well academically at the alternative school. One-third said that they knew they could make better grades which motivated them to complete assignments. Others said students learned responsibility for their own work, felt that they were capable of completing the assignments, and could do other interesting things when assignments were finished. This was not a unanimous perception, however. One student said that making good grades was still a problem and another continued to be frustrated at trying to complete assignments. Two students said that there were times that assignments just were not interesting. One of these said assignments were more boring than those at the base school.

Alternative school faculty. Faculty members credited improved student performance to a wide range of individualized teaching strategies and a multidisciplinary approach to planning. Each faculty member described some aspect of individualizing instruction as critical to meeting the unique needs of each student. There was an underlying belief that "mainstream instructional strategies have not worked with these students" which encouraged teachers and counselors to try a wide range of approaches. A few teachers noted that they often had to try numerous strategies before they become successful with some students. Specifically mentioned were focusing on "activities more than texts," keeping "interest level high and hands busy," designing shorter time spans for assignments, allowing students to make up work at any time, and emphasizing learning rather than testing.

Base school faculty. Nearly all base school personnel perceived that students at the alternative schools make better grades with little or no change in effort. The issue of "standards" was a recurring theme when discussing student academic progress, classwork, and grades. Several base school personnel mentioned that students' gains were more affective than academic.

6. Alternative school teachers perceive their roles to be different from traditional school teachers.

All of the faculty members with experience in other school settings identified the focus on the individual student and the emphasis placed on development of self-esteem as characteristics that distinguish teachers in the alternative school from those in traditional school settings. Maintaining an emphasis on social and emotional growth was mentioned as a means to achieve that priority. As one teacher pointed out, "We treat each person a little differently, depending on what we perceive his/her needs to be." Another said, "We are first a treatment center and then a school."

The faculty members also perceived themselves as more patient, flexible, and accepting of the unique qualities of children who are "out of step with the mainstream." They described themselves as "more accepting of students and their problems," "more tolerant and understanding of the unique qualities of children," "more focused on raising students' self concepts," more willing to "act as surrogate parents to meet the emotional needs of children," and "more patient and understanding."

The faculty members acknowledged that their freedom to be flexible with time and instructional plans is another major difference between the alternative school and traditional schools. They have more time to spend with each student and, as a result, know their students'

abilities much better. They also said that they are more able and willing to provide multiple academic and behavioral opportunities for students to experience success.

7. The unified belief and support system among the alternative school faculty is perceived to enhance student progress.

All alternative school faculty members mentioned in one way or another that they believe it is more important to base their expectations for student performance on students' abilities and aptitudes than on standards. They also noted that their primary expectations were for social and emotional development, followed by academic improvement. Each commented on the their realistic expectations for student achievement based on each student's abilities and aptitudes. All perceived their combined efforts to improve students' self-esteem (e.g., closeness, friendliness, trustworthiness, supportiveness, fairness, encouragement) as an important difference between the alternative school and the base school. One teacher summed up the expectations held by faculty members saying, "We take a child where he/she is and expect progress from that point." Another said, "We expect students to cope socially and emotionally, then improve academically." While it was suggested that this might be interpreted to mean that they sometimes "expect less academically," another teacher said, "We set goals students feel they can meet." One of their overriding expectations was that students learn behaviors and coping strategies that would enable them to "function at an acceptable level" at their base schools.

A large percentage of the faculty members indicated that their belief that real change takes place slowly and their willingness to recognize and reward small successes were major differences between the alternative and traditional school approaches. Noticing and rewarding even "very small achievements" were mentioned as important in helping students achieve the expectations faculty members held for them. According to one teacher, the faculty "looks for signs of improvement or a student's willingness to work on problems." None expected changes to take place "overnight."

The close working relationships, mutual support, small "unit" structure, and the "family atmosphere" were mentioned as other major differences between the alternative and traditional school settings. The teachers indicated that the team or "family" structure encouraged cooperation and a feeling that "everyone works together in the classroom." In addition to fostering a sense of cooperation among students and teachers, the teachers also specifically mentioned discussing strategies, sharing ideas, mutual problem solving, and exchanging materials. One described faculty relationships as "a multidisciplinary teamwork approach" to identifying students' problems and planning ways to address their needs. Several identified the therapeutic counseling role of guidance counselors as providing the support that teachers need in working with difficult students. Since they believe that students "act out" due to stress, they cited counseling support for building self-esteem and developing self-regulated behavior management and also strong administrative support as critical components in dealing with their students.

8. Perceptions of the impact of the alternative school experience on student outcomes varies considerably among the respondent groups.

Students. Of the 41 students interviewed, eighty percent cited one or more improvements resulting from their alternative school experience, fifteen percent said it had been of no particular benefit to them, and five percent said that they had changed on their own. Of those indicating progress, four students felt that they were progressing academically, but were continuing to have trouble behaviorally or socially. More than half indicated that their alternative school teachers or counselors had been helpful in promoting their personal development. Specifically mentioned was help in dealing with problems, in setting personal goals, in developing alternative ways of handling anger, and in learning how to calm down after being especially upset. One in six acknowledged that they had improved academically. In addition to improving their grades, some said that they now see the value of education and in taking responsibility for their own actions.

Forty percent also indicated that they have learned to get along with others better and have developed new ways to control their behavior. A smaller percentage said they have become more self-disciplined and organized, have improved their attitudes, or now have a desire to do better in school regardless of the setting. A number of specific statements related to additional areas of personal progress. Mentioned frequently was learning that they are not the only ones with problems, that others have serious problems, that running away from problems will not solve them, and that they are capable of coping with their problems.

Faculty members at alternative schools. The faculty members noted student progress in affective areas such as social and emotional development more often than academic gain. Improved self-image, increased self-discipline, and improved ability to deal with anger and handle tempers were noted as the most common areas of growth. Improvements were also seen in problem solving skills, students' willingness to accept more responsibility related to work and conduct, greater success in making friends and developing relationships, and increased hope for the future. One faculty member noted that some students learned to enjoy learning because of the academic success they experienced. They acknowledged, however, that despite their efforts they do not reach all students. One teacher said, "Some kids we have felt unsuccessful with have gone back to their base schools and made it."

Parents. Parents were not interviewed in this study. Students, however, were asked about their parents' perceptions. According to the students, parents credited the alternative school with helping students learn to deal with their problems. They specifically mentioned the benefit of counseling and one-on-one attention for students who are having academic, emotional, or behavioral problems. The students reported that many of their parents did not like the alternative school at first, but had changed their minds as a result of their experiences.

Faculty members at base schools. Faculty members at the base schools indicated that success rates varied according to the individual student. In assessing the academic and behavioral performance of the students in this study who had completed a semester after returning from the alternative school, nine were making minimal to significant improvements, five were still exhibiting serious problems, and one student had been suspended for the remainder of the year. This student was described as "as bad as can be in all areas - and very violent." Of the nine students who appeared to have improved in their attendance, academic performance, and behavior, four have been considered "success stories" by their base school personnel.

Base school personnel generally did not credit the alternative school with either the failures or the successes of the returning students. In most cases, they cited family, friends, or drug/alcohol problems as reasons why a particular student "will never change." According to one principal, a student who lives with his grandmother "never has had any discipline and three months at the alternative school could hardly turn him around." Others expressed their belief that the students improve while at the alternative school because they have been removed from their peer associations and problems that keep them in trouble. When reintroduced into the same peer group, they "return to their old ways." When discussing a "success story," many likewise credited the strong family support and often described the student as a "good kid" or a "smart kid" who "just made a big mistake" and "learned from it." A small percentage of administrators viewed the alternative school as making a big difference for those students who need to be forced to stop and think about what they are doing. Nearly all, however, indicated that the school is a necessary "step" between the base school and expulsion or a valuable place to "get rid of students" who are causing excessive problems.

9. Parents are perceived as contributing to students' problems or progress.

Alternative school faculty. While the alternative school faculty members indicated that they tried be of assistance to parents, they did not feel that most parents took advantage of the opportunities for help. Although their case load could provide more one-on-one assistance and counseling for parents, many said that parents were less likely to come in when requested than

parents of students in traditional schools. As a result, improving the consistency in discipline at home, which the faculty believed to be essential to student progress, was not as achievable as it could have been. All faculty members did not concur with this position, however. One teacher said, "In most cases, parents are thankful that their children have the opportunity to be here and are usually more cooperative."

The majority perceived that parents either contributed to or hindered the success of their students because of their expectations and actions. The few parents who held reasonable expectations for their children, provided consistent discipline, set good examples for their children (conduct, speech, and work habits), and followed rules were those identified as helping their children succeed. Most parents with whom they worked, however, impeded their students' progress. These parents continued to allow unnecessary tardies or absences, set up adversarial positions with the school and teachers, or did not support the teachers. Many denied or enabled their child's problem behaviors, lacked consistency in dealing with their child, ignored their child, supported their child's inappropriate behavior, condoned their child's use of drugs or alcohol, or used drugs or alcohol with their child.

Base school faculty. Although not asked to describe parental influence specifically, many base school personnel commented that students with positive family influence were the ones who would benefit from their alternative school experience while those with negative family influence could not be helped by the experience. One principal described a student who was a success story as having a "terrific family." He described the parents' involvement in repairing the facility their son had damaged as indicative of their positive role modeling and support. The principal actually attributed the students' progress to the expectations and support of the parents. Several other principals and guidance counselors linked the failure of returning alternative school students to the lack of parental support. One said the student "has lived with the grandmother all of his life and she just can't control him. This child has never learned to follow rules." Another commented that "there's no one at home to monitor what this child does--he might as well be on his own."

10. Students perceive the most positive conditions of the alternative school to be the interpersonal relationships with faculty members, the supportive atmosphere of the school, and the opportunities provided by the school.

"Teachers" and "counselors" were identified by thirty percent as the best feature of the alternative school. Fifteen percent emphasized the numerous opportunities for contact with faculty members and the positive attitude and concern of the staff in helping students as strengths of the school program. In addition, a few students specifically mentioned that faculty members put extra effort into helping students graduate. The overall atmosphere of the school was the second most frequently mentioned area of satisfaction for students. Their comments related to the "better atmosphere" and the smaller, quieter, and safer environment. The reduced level of pressure related to peers and academics was also noted. Students also enjoyed opportunities to have fun at school and to express themselves more freely. Two students liked not having to change classes and one of these two said that having "the same routine each day" made it easier for students.

11. Strict behavioral expectations and consequences are the areas identified by students as the least liked aspects of the alternative school program.

Fifteen percent could not identify anything that they disliked about their experience at the alternative school. Twenty percent cited having strict rules and regulations, especially those related to behavior and smoking, as the aspect of the school program they liked least. Twelve percent noted the general lack of freedom while several others mentioned a variety of specific rules including the behavior point system, the quiet room, and required attendance. Two students mentioned overly strict teachers who often asked "too many probing questions," and another said

some teachers "take what you say the wrong way." A few students suggested modifying the schedule of the school day and improving some teachers' expectations for them. Some disliked the work required, group sessions, having to make certain grades to receive privileges, limited athletic opportunities, not being able to change classes, and the overuse of the word "inappropriate." Five students mentioned the lack of buses or transportation to school as a problem for parents.

While twenty-five percent of the students had no suggestions for improving the alternative school, the remainder offered constructive criticism. They recommended providing a better, cleaner, and more attractive facility; allowing students more freedom; permitting smoking; providing bus transportation; hiring more teachers and firing some; providing better books and materials; including more activities, such as athletics; including more field trips; strengthening academic requirements; incorporating more advanced subjects into the curriculum; making classes more like public schools; shortening the school day; letting students eat lunch together; allowing students to wear jackets; providing opportunities for students to earn trust and privileges; allowing students to drive cars to school; and allowing students to stay at the alternative school beyond the designated time limit if they choose to do so.

12. Many of the suggestions the alternative school students made for improving their base schools focus on non-cost areas.

The alternative school students' suggestions for improving their base schools related primarily to improving the attitudes of some faculty members, increasing opportunities for student-teacher interaction, improving student relationships, and reducing the stress level. Thirty percent suggested improving the attitudes of faculty members in general, improving or replacing some principals and/or teachers, and encouraging all faculty members to be more caring, friendly, and dedicated. Twenty-five percent specifically mentioned improving the quantity and quality of student-teacher interactions. Providing more time for teachers to work with students was suggested as a means to accomplish this goal. Another costly suggestion was to reduce class size so that teachers could get to know their students better. Closely related was the need to encourage more involvement between teachers and students. Several also perceived the need to avoid stereotyping or judging students unfairly; to treat all students equally; and to avoid confronting students for minor problems, first offenses, or concerns they perceived as "not serious." Twenty percent also felt that improving student relationships was a change needed at their base schools. Improving race relations, reducing the number of fights, assisting students in dealing with peer pressure, helping all students understand the problems other students are facing, and encouraging students to avoid poor choices of friends were their specific suggestions.

Eighteen percent indicated that they would like to see their base schools improve their policies, programs, and facilities. Several wished there could be a more orderly and secure environment for students. Some recommended not being too lenient on some students, particularly those with problems. One suggested "sending more students with problems to schools where they can get help." A small percentage focused on cleaning up the drug problem in schools. One of them said we "need to use radar and dogs to search schools for drugs--those who want to smuggle guns and drugs can get past machines." A few suggested improving lunch programs, including "allowing students to eat outside." Their other suggestions included reducing the structure of the school program, making classrooms more interesting, allowing smoking, providing music while students work, and reducing or flexing time requirements. Three additional comments related to eliminating transfers, closing the school, and improving the school facilities.

13. Helping each student experience success was the primary suggestion alternative school teachers had for their traditional school counterparts in addressing the needs of disenfranchised students.

When asked what teachers are able to do in a specialized setting such as an alternative school that teachers in traditional schools could also do, each respondent emphasized seeking ways to help students feel successful. One said "Provide small rewards for good conduct, rather than just penalties for poor conduct." Another said, "Find a way for each student to succeed in at least some small way." Yet another said, "Encourage students to work--even when they are far behind. Don't allow them to lose hope." One suggested that teachers themselves should never lose hope. She said, "Even though it may appear that we are not getting through to these kids, something often happens later down the road that shows that we did make a positive impression. My advice would be not to ever give up on the child."

Keeping a positive attitude and setting an example for students in speech, conduct, habits, and the treatment of others were noted as essential to establishing a success-oriented environment. One teacher said, "You may be the best role model the student has!" Listening to students and understanding their needs and concerns were also specifically mentioned as priorities. One respondent said, "Students with problems need time to be heard by caring adults who are not afraid to listen to horror and shame and then are still willing to set limits and be consistent." This person further suggested, "Take time for love and understanding."

Several other suggestions were given to help traditional teachers meet the needs of students similar to those at the alternative school. They included showing students more attention, supporting them emotionally, finding a way to stay with a subject until a student has mastered it, and individualizing when possible. This was linked to flexibility in teaching strategies, in working with students, in scheduling, and in establishing expectations for academic and behavioral progress. One suggestion, directed to all traditional schools, was "to provide more counseling for all students to help them handle the serious problems nearly all students are facing."

14. There is no consistent plan of action regarding methods for integrating alternative school students into their base school environments.

There was considerable variation in methods described for helping the students readjust to their base school cultures. At six schools, there were no formal steps being taken. Most referred to registering the student, developing a schedule of classes, and, in some cases, reviewing the school policies. At two schools, the students talked with a principal or guidance counselor upon reentry. At one of these schools, the guidance counselor said that this was not always the policy, but that she had a personal interest in these students. At two other schools, the respondents described an established process designed to help the students make the transition: one school has a support person who meets regularly with the student as well as a number of special support programs available to meet the needs of the students. The other school assigns the students a peer counselor, sets up regular meetings with the guidance counselor, and involves the student in a support group.

Conclusions

Alternative schools can provide an intervention other than expulsion for students with problems that cannot be handled at the base school. Educators need an option for dealing with students who need services beyond what they can provide through traditional school programs. Some of the students in this study improved behaviorally and academically under very structured and labor intensive conditions that are not available in most traditional high schools. The school system's concern for these students was translated into financial support for a separate school facility and low teacher-pupil and counselor-pupil ratios. Other school systems have

incorporated alternative settings within the existing traditional school structures. This study was not intended to assess the effectiveness of the structure of the school. It did, however, elicit perceptions regarding the need for "some kind" of alternative setting to address the unique needs of students with severe problems. It is apparent from the interviews, however, that there is a lack of consistency in determining how "severe" is interpreted. With variations in interpretations, such settings often become "dumping grounds" for students with whom school personnel have become frustrated rather than truly alternative settings that could help students who are at the margins at their base schools. According to Sinclair and Ghory (1987), traditional schools often choose to remove marginal students to alternative school settings rather than to seek solutions or change conditions to better meet their needs. They feel that "educators . . . have become too easily satisfied with not reaching students" (p. 2).

The alternative school studied is meeting the needs of students who are functioning marginally at their base schools. This school, consistent with Glasser's (1983) control theory, attempts to provide students with the tools they need to deal with their own anger, behavior, and academic demands and is helping students remain in school, at least for the short-term. It is also providing a means for fulfilling the democratic obligation of developing all students to their potential. Dewey's philosophy underscores the need to create educational environments that allow all students an equal opportunity for attainment and that develop democratic processes. Whalen (1985) charges that "excellence in education must mean more than improving the abilities of those who are succeeding in our present school environment" (p. 106). He discusses the growing dropout rate and its impact on the dropout's life: underemployment, limited mobility and social life, and, in some cases, a life of functional illiteracy. He goes on to say, "Perhaps the saddest element of all is the fact that many of these youngsters could have been helped to remain in school" (p. 106). This is evident within this study as several students and faculty members at both school sites commented that some alternative school students would prefer to remain there through graduation.

Close, supportive relationships are seen as essential for helping students make progress or needed changes. Nearly all of the students in this study credited caring, trustworthy faculty members at the alternative school with some of their personal growth. The alternative school environment provided opportunities for such relationships with several adults and with students who had had similar or greater problems. A major focus of the alternative school program was on improving one's own behavior, developing more effective ways of interacting with others, and strengthening relationships with peers, parents, teachers, and other adults. Having experienced some success in their relationships with others at the alternative school, many of these students suggested that relationships at their base schools could be improved. What was learned in this study supports the conclusion of a study called "Voices from the Inside" that relationships are at the heart of student success in any school setting (The Institute for Education in Transformation, 1992). This extensive study found that being respected, feeling connected, and being affirmed by others were dominant concerns for all students, but were especially critical for those who were less successful.

There is a need for alternative schools and traditional base schools to work more in concert, rather than in isolation, opposition, or competition with each other. The varied perceptions about the value of the alternative school, the quality of education provided by the alternative school, and the impact of the alternative school on student success rate reflect deeply held beliefs about the purposes of schooling. While the alternative school emphasizes affective aspects of students' growth, traditional schools focus on the cognitive. Alternative school personnel believe in establishing challenging, but achievable expectations for each student rather than adhering to traditional school "standards" which their students could not achieve. At the same time, however, traditional school personnel acknowledge but question the impact of the affective approach provided by the alternative school. Their perceptions are often substantiated by academic problems their returning students have when placed back into the standards-oriented traditional classrooms. Part of the problem is a lack of communication and clarity between

alternative and base school personnel. Many traditional school personnel do not know why the alternative school program is structured as it is. Alternative school personnel, at this point, have had no opportunity for interaction with faculty members at other schools. Alternative school teachers also feel that others do not perceive them as accomplishing much more than "holding" students for a designated time period and giving them easy grades. As a result of the lack of articulation and consensus, the two structures are not living up to the potential they might have as a collaborative approach.

The lack of communication between the alternative school and the base school is a factor that most negatively impacts the effectiveness of the alternative school in helping students make long-term academic or behavioral improvements. As one guidance counselor said, "If we knew more about what had been done with the student while at the alternative school, we would have a better idea about how to work with him as he returns." After thinking a moment about her comment, she added, "I guess it would have been helpful for them if we had explained a little more about the student other than what was written on the disciplinary reports. There's a lot behind those reports." This lack of articulation is reflected in the inconsistent and often inadequate procedures in place to help students make the transition between the schools. At the alternative school, indepth screening and one-on-one counseling sessions help with student adjustment and teacher planning. The capabilities are not the same for the student returning to the base school. Not knowing where a student is, it is difficult for base school personnel to determine "what ought to be" for that student. As a result, the alternative school assignment becomes more of a "stop gap" or "patchwork" approach rather than one focused on continuous progress and growth.

Clearly, the alternative school program exists apart from the traditional school program. If the integration of the two is determined to be desirable, then certain obstacles must be overcome. Some are fiscal. The alternative school lacks adequate personnel to provide the range of academic courses needed by students. As a result, many students have to drop courses such as physics, advanced biology, or advanced math that they were taking at the base school. The faculty also lack the range of materials, equipment, and technology needed to adequately challenge their students. Financial support for the school has been focused on low faculty/student ratios rather than on technology that could make distance learning possible. Base schools also lack the resources to deal with the students either before or after they are assigned to the alternative school. Most lack the resources to provide adequate counseling services. Many elementary schools, the level most likely to prevent long-term problems, have no guidance counselors. Most high school guidance counselors are primarily responsible for scheduling classes, overseeing students' course credits for graduation, and coordinating testing information. Unfortunately, they too often lack opportunities to counsel and, therefore, cannot practice "preventative educational medicine." The base schools also lack the resources to help students make the adjustment back to the base school. Only two of the ten schools in this study had personnel available to coordinate their efforts. In both of these cases, funding was provided by external sources.

Other obstacles, although they involve cost, negatively impact the success of integrating the programs. One is a pervasive perception among base school personnel that the "students could not have changed" that much in a few months. This perception suggests that there may be little interest in determining the improvements student made at the alternative school. It also suggests that the student might be "re-labeled" upon reentry to the school. Another obstacle is that students, for the duration of their time at the alternative school, are removed from the influence of their peer groups. Once reintroduced to the base school, their former peer group welcomes them back when other students might not. Therefore, base school personnel find many students falling back into their previous patterns and feel powerless to overcome the influence of friends.

What is learned from studying alternative schools should have a far significant impact on traditional school settings. The positive conditions in this alternative school could be incorporated into the traditional base schools. Studies such as this one suggest ways of dealing

with marginal students that could be incorporated into any school or classroom. It is time to question the status quo and to rethink the structure, expectations, and relationships that exist in all of our schools. This position is supported by Wehlage (1989) who contends that "what is good for at-risk students is usually good for other students as well" (p. 5). The mere existence of a dropout rate as high as twenty-five percent indicates that traditional schools are not accomplishing all that they intend. He continues to say, "For many youth, school offers a single discouraging message: If you don't fit in, it is your fault; if you don't like things the way they are, move on" (p. 8). Traditional schools could learn from effective alternative schools and could become more aggressive in finding ways to address the important needs of students who are not measuring up to their "standards." Educators need to recognize that many of their "problem" students are trying to satisfy what Maslow (1943) identified as lower order survival and belonging needs. These students are unable to move toward self-actualization until those needs are fulfilled to some extent. This study underscores the importance of focusing on unmet needs in all school settings.

Perspectives and Educational Importance of the Study

This study focuses on perceptions of those affected by one alternative high school. Although the findings and conclusions relate to only one school setting, the study has implications for improving the quality of schooling within either alternative or traditional school structures. It is our belief that what can be learned from studying school structures specifically geared to helping disenfranchised students develop a sense of efficacy and control can be applied in classrooms in every school setting. Furthermore, this study provides important considerations for assimilating students from alternative school structures back into their base schools. It is hoped that this study will also provide a means to break down barriers and open dialogue among alternative school and traditional school personnel.

This study also provides several implications for further research. First, the perceptions of the students who had returned to their base schools were not included in this study. A decision was made by the researchers and the base school personnel to wait until the end of the second semester to interview the students. This would provide a better assessment of their long-term progress and would give the students longer to develop a feeling of being part of the base school. Therefore, the researchers plan to continue their research agenda with these students at a later date. Second, there is a tremendous need for more knowledge about how to reduce the numbers of marginal or disenfranchised students. This study focuses on how schools deal with such students. There is certainly a need for further research in this area. It would be far more important, however, to identify ways to prevent students from becoming disenfranchised. Third, further research is needed on the impact of relationships, affective educational approaches, and a community of support in meeting the needs of low-achieving or problem students. Studying alternative schools provides a viable means for learning about these students and their teachers. According to Raywid (1983) alternative schools provide a worthwhile model for educational improvement because they offer a valuable model of the change process itself and are able to be flexible in adjusting programs to better meet the needs of their students. Fourth, research should be conducted to determine the quality of academic programs provided in alternative school settings. According to DeBlois (1989), curricula for high risk students should include three components: a vocational orientation, interdisciplinary team projects, and a mastery learning/continuous progress approach. The alternative school in this study does not include a vocational component, but does attempt to address the other two areas. No attempt was made in this study to observe instructional segments to determine the quality of instruction. Nor did the researchers examine the alternative school curriculum. Since this was a major area of concern for base school personnel, it would be a logical next step in the research. Finally, if alternative schools have the potential to reduce dropout rates, improve student achievement, and provide an

alternative educational opportunity for students dissatisfied with traditional programs, they should continue to be the focus of numerous research efforts.

This study was an initial investigation by the researchers into alternative school structures. The research objectives addressed a wide range of topics and interests related to one school within a single school system. The researchers intend to continue their agenda by focusing in on specific aspects of these structures and on other alternative school settings.

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Appendix A
Alternative School Student Interview

1. How long have you been at this school?

2. Why did you come to this school? (probes: Was there an event or specific problem that forced you to leave your base school? If you dropped out of your base school, why did you decide to return to this school?)

3. Tell me about this school. How is it different from your base school?

4. Tell me about your teachers. How are they different from the teachers at your base school? Is there a teacher that you feel especially close to at this school? What is it about that teacher that you like?

5. How would you describe the other students at this school? Describe your relationship with them. How are they the same or different than students in your base school?

6. How would you describe the guidance counselors at this school? How are they the same or different than students in your base school?

7. How would you describe the principal at this school? How is she the same or different than the principal or principals in your base school?

8. Tell me about the work (classwork/homework) that you are required to do at this school. How is it different from your base school?

9. You have already described the situation that brought you to this school. How do you feel about how your teachers, counselors, or principal have helped you deal with your problems?

10. What kinds of personal progress have you made during your time at this school? (probes: academic, behavior problems, relationships with others)

11. How do your parents feel about your being at this school? What do your parents think about this school?

12. What do you like best about this school?

13. What do you like least about this school?

14. If you could improve your base school, what would you change about it?

15. How would you change this school to make it better?

16. Is there anything you want to add that we did not ask?

Appendix A
Alternative School Teacher Questionnaire

1. How long have you been at this school?
2. What circumstances led to your becoming a teacher at this school?
3. How is this school different from other schools you have taught in? What is unique about it?
4. Do you perceive that teachers at this school are different from those at other schools? In what ways (e.g., roles they play, personal characteristics, instructional strategies, qualifications)?
5. How would you describe your students? How do they compare with students in other schools?
6. Do you perceive the working relationship of teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors to be different from those found in other schools? In what ways are they different?
7. In what ways do the goals and expectations for student performance at this school differ from those of other schools?
8. In what ways do instructional strategies and behavior management approaches differ from those in other high schools? If there is a difference, what is the reason for it?
9. What progress do you see in your students during their stay at this school (e.g., academic performance, behavior, relationships with others)?
10. What role do parents play in helping students succeed? What kinds of things do parents do that gets in the way of students' succeeding?
11. Are there any opportunities for working with parents in this setting that are not available in other settings? If so, what are they?
12. What do you like best about working at this school?
13. What do you consider to be the strengths of this school?
14. What are teachers able to do in this setting that other classroom teachers could also do?
15. What would you change about this school? Does anything get in the way of your doing what you perceive to be important?
16. What have you learned through your experiences at this school that would be beneficial to other high school teachers? Based on your experiences at this school, what advice could you give to other high school teachers and administrators in meeting the needs of disenfranchised students?
17. Is there anything that has not been asked that is important to your work satisfaction or to student progress in your school setting? Please add any information you feel might be pertinent to our study.

Appendix B
Base School Personnel Interview

We are conducting a follow-up study of students who completed the spring semester of the 1991-92 school year at [the alternative school]. We are trying to determine how the student is progressing after having completed a semester back at [the base school].

1. To begin with, what insights do you have regarding students (in general) who have returned from [the alternative school] ?

2. How much contact have you had with student(s) returning from[the alternative school] ? (Names of student(s): _____)

3. How is the studentcurrently performing?

   in classes?

   attendance?

   behavior?

   relationships?

4. What has the school done to integrate these students back into the base school culture?

5. In reflecting on your collective experience in dealing with [the alternative school] students, what would you suggest as the ideal way of helping them?

6. Is there anything about [the alternative school] students that you would like to add?